

Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs

Thursday, December 3, 2020 | 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. ET

Virtual Meeting Minutes

PARTICIPANTS:

Ms. Frances Perez-Wilhite, Chairperson
Mr. James (Jim) O’Farrell
Mr. Lynn Lowder
Mr. Michael (Mike) Phipps
Mr. Michael (Mike) Zacchea
Ms. Valerie Lewis
Ms. Kandis Porter
Mr. Larry Stubblefield, OVBD Associate Administrator
Ms. Amy Garcia
Ms. Cheryl Simms
Ms. Jennifer Razzino, For the Record (meeting recorder)

The virtual meeting of the Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs (ACVBA) took place on December 3, 2020.

Call to Order – Mr. Stubblefield, ACVBA Designated Federal Officer (DFO), called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. ET.

Opening and Welcoming Remarks – Mr. Stubblefield welcomed the committee and turned the meeting over to Ms. Frances Perez-Wilhite – Chairperson.

Introduction/Meeting Logistics – Mr. Stan Kurtz took roll call. He then invited Chairperson Ms. Frances Perez-Wilhite to provide welcoming remarks.

Ms. Frances Perez-Wilhite, Chairperson: During Ms. Perez-Wilhite’s opening remarks, she discussed the struggles of the pandemic of 2020 and stated “year 2020 has been a year of delay. The pandemic made us take an unwanted pause, which forced us to take care of ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and our business concerns.” She also stated, “In spite of this unprecedented delay, the ACVBA was still able to communicate with and support our veteran-owned businesses and the Small Business Administration.”

The chairperson discussed the following accomplishments: The committee created the #ACVBA hashtag for use on LinkedIn and Twitter. The possibility of CSPAN broadcasting coverage of our ACVBA quarterly meetings once we return to meeting in person.

Additionally, she stated “in 2021, we know that veterans will prove once again that no matter how bleak the business outlook, no matter the political landscape, no matter when the COVID-19 vaccine arrives, our fellow veterans will lead this nation’s economic recovery and resurgence.” The chairperson then recognized Mr. Jim O’Farrell for his contributions to the ACVBA committee and chairmanship during his tenure.

Larry Stubblefield, Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD): Mr. Stubblefield provided an update on the following: National Veterans Small Business Week 2020 was largest ever with more than 200 events, over 12,000 participants. The SBA Paycheck Protection Program had a total of 5.2 million loans. The PPP loan forgiveness phase currently processed 670,000 of those loans, and the Office of Capital Access is tabulating the numbers in terms of the demographics, to include the veterans who participated in the PPP program.

Sharon Ridley, Executive Director, VA OSDDBU: Ms. Ridley recognized her colleagues on the call: Ms. Kimberly McLeod, Mr. Cordell Smith, Mr. John Perkins, Ms. Suzana Iveljic, and Ms. Beth Torres. Ms. Ridley discussed the achievements in FY20 and the latest updates on procurement opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses, veteran-owned small business participation in VA COVID-19 initiatives, and the Center for Verification and Evaluation FY19 procurement SBA scorecard awarding VA an A. In FY20, efforts enabled 3 million in VA contracts to four of the 29 members and 13.5 million federal-wide to 10 of the 29 members. She reported that COVID-19 had minimal impact on average processing time for 21 verification applications, remaining low at 33 days.

Salomeh Ghorbani, Program Manager, General Services Administration (GSA) SAM.BETA.GOV: Ms. Ghorbani stated that in April 2021, GSA will be integrating the legacy SAM.GOV into BETA.SAM, and once those two coexist, the word “beta” is going to go away. She stated the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) was merged with Contract Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) and will be part of BETA.SAM. Ms. Ghorbani logged in to BETA.SAM.GOV and provided the committee members a virtual walkthrough of some functions.

Robert Carpenter, Acting Chief, 7(a) Program Branch Access to Capital: Mr. Carpenter provided updates on the OCA and OFA lending activity for the last completed fiscal year, ended September 30. He stated the numbers reflected that the 7(a) loan activity was as expected with the way things have been going in the economy lately, with a dip in the total numbers and the total dollars for year-to date activity, so the year-end activity for 7(a) loans has gone down slightly. But the year-end activity for the 504 loan program has gone up significantly, and they attribute that to a couple of factors, one being the 504 loan program last year instituted a 25-year debenture to extend the term of the loans for those 504 loans for purchasing fixed assets. Mr. Carpenter stated that they saw a drop-off of loans approved to veterans for 7(a) and 504 which they believe correlates with the overall drop-off in the number of loans. He also noted that it remains pretty much a standard that 5 percent of SBA loans are going to those businesses that declare themselves as veterans, and it is worth noting that this is purely a voluntary submission of the demographic data, as is the race, gender, and ethnicity data that is collected with the application. He stated that 2020 remained steady, 57.7 percent of our loans under the Microloan Program are going to minority-owned businesses, 47 percent to woman-owned businesses, but only 3.7 percent are going to veteran-owned businesses. He noted the CARES Act made the veterans fee relief permanent for the SBA Express Loan Program and eliminated the provision that required a subsidy-neutral provision for the 7(a) Program.

Stanley Jones Jr, Program Analyst, SBA All Small Mentor Protégé Program (ASMPP) and SBA’s 8(a): Mr. Jones provided an update on the SBA consolidation of the 8(a) Mentor-Protégé Program and the All Small Mentor-Protégé Program. He provided a brief background of the 8(a) Mentor-Protégé Program; it was established in 1998, and then in 2016, SBA stood up the All Small Mentor-Protégé Program, which was mirrored after the 8(a) Program. The biggest change is that district offices who were responsible for processing the 8(a) mentor-protégé programs have been removed from the process, and everything works through the SBA Headquarters team through Certify.SBA.gov. He stated another significant change, was to the mentor/protégé relationship. When the mentorship relationships do not produce the benefits that they had agreed to, or there were no benefits received during the 18-month period where the protégé can demonstrate that they have not received any benefits from the mentor, there is an opportunity for them to get that agreement annulled. As a result, that agreement does not count against their two-lifetime limit. He also stated they brought over from the 8(a) side about 350 agreements to the roughly 1,200 that were already in the All Small Mentor-Protégé Program, so there are about 1,500 active agreements, a very significant number. Of those agreements, 36 percent were service-disabled veterans, and 4 percent were veteran-owned small businesses.

Amy B. Garcia, Veterans Business Analyst, Policy and Engagement, Veteran Owned Surplus Property Panel Discussion with Key Stakeholders (GSA, OVBD, GCBD, VA, NASASP): Ms. Garcia introduced the key stakeholders: Chris Clarke, SBA; David Loines, SBA; Nick Manalisay, SBA Office of Government Contracting; John Perkins, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Matthew Manger, U.S. General Services Administration; and Steve Ekin and Elizabeth Cooper, National Association of State Agencies for Surplus Property. The objective of the briefing was to provide the Committee an introduction to stakeholders who are instrumental in implementing the program that allows VOSBs to receive donated federal surplus personal property. OVBD invited a panel to the Committee to introduce themselves and provide information about their respective organizations.

Public Forum Discussion – Mr. Stan Kurtz opened the meeting up to the public forum for questions or comments. One person asked about the changes to the Mentor-Protégé Program. The person wanted to know why it has improved and what are the requirements or what are the restrictions or how the program has enhanced from the change. Mr. Stanley Jones provided a response. Another person commented that VA should provide more granular detail regarding some of their outreach sessions with small businesses, more importantly, the virtual match meetings. There were no further questions or comments, and Mr. Kurtz concluded the public forum.

Adjournment – Mr. Stubblefield thanked the presenters, chairperson, and committee members for their participation and then the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Stubblefield at 2:54 p.m. ET.